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Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 /078 W
----------115910 180719Z /11
R 170901Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0465
INFO USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 14869

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, JA
SUBJECT: POLITICAL MOOD IN FUKUDA CAMP FOLLOWING PFT SIGNING

1. AUGUST 14 DINNER HOSTED BY CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY SHINTARO ABE FOR DCM AND OTHER EMBASSY OFFICERS PROVIDED OPPORTUNITY TO GAUGE POLITICAL MOOD OF FUKUDA CAMP IN WAKE OF SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF JAPAN-CHINA PEACE AND FRIEND-SHIP TREATY (PFT). ABE AND OTHERS ATTENDING (INCLUDING PRIME MINISTER'S SON AND AIDE, YASUO FUKUDA) COULD HARDLY CONTAIN THEIR SATISFACTION OVER SIGNING OF PFT. FOCUSING ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TREATY, THEY FELT THAT MANNER IN WHICH IT WAS CONCLUDED (I.E., PRC APPARENTLY MAKING MOST OF THE LAST-MINUTE CONCESSIONS) HAD GREATLY INCREASED PM FUKUDA'S PRESTIGE AT HOME AND SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED HIS CHANCES OF REMAINING AT THE HELM BEYOND DECEMBER. SPECIFICALLY, FUKUDA'S HANDLING OF THE FINAL STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS HAD SILENCED ALL POTENTIAL CRITICS OF THE TREATY, BOTH IN OPPOSITION AND AMONG HAWKS IN HIS OWN PARTY, SINCE IT HAD REINFORCED AND
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NOT COMPROMISED JAPAN'S "OMNIDIRECTIONAL" FOREIGN POLICY. IN THIS CONTEXT, ABE EMPHASIZED THAT BASIS FOR THAT POLICY REMAINED ALLIANCE WITH U.S.

2. ABE HAD LITTLE TO SAY ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF PFT BEYOND EXPRESSING CONFIDENCE THAT SOVIET REACTION WOULD NOT BE VERY SERIOUS. (HE COMMENTED THAT EVEN IF

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SOVIET AMBASSADOR POLYANSKII STAYED AWAY FOR A YEAR, JAPANESE WOULD NOT WORRY.) ASKED BY EMBOFF HOW HE THOUGHT U.S. SHOULD NOW PROCEED ON CHINA (I.E., WHETHER WE SHOULD PRESS FOR EARLY NORMALIZATION OR FOLLOW MORE CAUTIOUS APPROACH), ABE WAS QUICK TO VOICE HIS PREFERENCE FOR THE LATTER, CITING DIFFERENT NATURE OF U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONSHIP AND BROADER U.S. RESPONSIBILITY FOR STABILITY IN ASIA.

3. ABE DISPLAYED SUPREME CONFIDENCE THAT, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF SKILLFUL HANDLING OF PFT NEGOTIATIONS, PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA WOULD SUCCEED IN HIS BID TO REMAIN IN OFFICE FOLLOWING DECEMBER LDP PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. HE COMMENTED THAT ABOUT THE ONLY THING WHICH COULD UPSET FUKUDA'S PATH TO REELECTION WOULD BE MAJOR FLARE-UP IN U.S.-JAPAN ECONOMIC RELATIONS, SINCE THIS WOULD IMPACT DIRECTLY ON PARTY'S PERCEPTION OF HIS ABILITY TO MANAGE JAPAN'S MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP.

4. ABE PREDICTED THAT EXTRAORDINARY DIT SESSION TO BE CONVENED IN LATTER HALF OF SEPTEMBER WOULD PROCEED EXTREMELY SMOOTHLY. HE NOTED THAT ONE FACTOR IN THIS SITUATION WAS FACT THAT ANY MAJOR OPPOSITION ATTACK ON SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET OR OTHER KEY ISSUE (E.G., KURISU AND KANEMARU STATEMENTS) COULD PROVIDE APPROPRIATE JUSTIFICA-TION FOR DIET DISSOLUTION, WHICH NEITHER OPPOSITION PARTIES NOR FUKUDA RIVALS IN LDP WANTED. WHILE LESS CONFIDENTIAL

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INFLUENTIAL FUKUDA FOLLOWERS CONTINUED TO TALK ABOUT LIKELIHOOD OF DIET DISSOLUTION (AND PRESS IS FULL OF SUCH SPECULATION), ABE REFUSED TO BE DRAWN OUT ON THIS SUBJECT. IN RESPONSE TO DIRECT QUESTION, HOWEVER, YASUO FUKUDA WAS CATEGORICAL IN HIS VIEW THAT GENERAL ELECTION WOULD NOT BE NEEDED TO ASSURE HIS FATHER'S REELECTION AS PARTY PRESIDENT. MANSFIELD

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